
FESTA DEL CINEMA DI ROMA 2026
SPECIAL SCREENING
idfa
START AND RAI CINEMA
PRESENT
THE MIDDLE ROOM
A FILM BY
ENRICO MAISTO
START AND RAI CINEMA PRESENT THE MIDDLE ROOM A FILM BY ENRICO MAISTO PRODUCED BY START WITH RAI CINEMA IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH NOHA FILM EDITED BY ENRICA GATTO, VERONICA SCOTTI SOUND DESIGN AND MIXER MASSIMO MARIANI COLOUR GRADING JACOPO LOBOSCO STORY CONSULTANT ZEYNEP GÜZEL
PRODUCED BY RICCARDO ANNONI AND FRANCESCA RICCARDI FOR START AND ANTONIO PRATA FOR NOHA FILM WITH FUNDING FROM MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA – DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA E AUDIOVISIVO WITH THE SUPPORT OF FILM COMMISSION TORINO PIEMONTE - PIEMONTE DOC FILM FUND
PHOTOGRAPHY, SOUND, AND DIRECTION ENRICO MAISTO FESTIVAL DISTRIBUTION JOHANNES KLEIN FOR IN PERSPECTIVE FILM DISTRIBUTION OPEN DOB – DISTRIBUZIONI DAL BASSO

PRESS NOTE

THE MIDDLE ROOM

(La stanza degli altri)

A documentary film by Enrico Maisto
Italy / Switzerland / 2026 / 79 min

International Premiere
IDFA 2026, Luminous section

Trailer

- Watch
- Download (1080p, Dropbox)

High-resolution stills and press materials

- Stills: Dropbox folder
- Clips: Dropbox folder
- Poster: Dropbox folder
- Press Kit (English): Google Drive
- Press Note (Italian): PDF

Logline

A Senegalese couple finds welcome in the home of a retired Italian woman in Milan. In this unlikely household, distance and tension coexist alongside the possibility of becoming a family – but what makes a family?

Themes

family • migration and integration • power relations • generational and cultural differences

For press and interview enquiries, please contact:

Dimitra Kouzi
dimitra@kouziproductions.com
+30 694 6060 862 (WhatsApp)

FB: Kouzi Productions
IG: kouzi_productions

Social media (IG)

start_produzione_cinema
noha.film
enricomaisto1
frafrancescariccardi
Inperspectivefilm
openddb

Synopsis

Mietta, a retired juvenile court judge, lives alone in an elegant neighbourhood of Milan. Everything changes when her long-time friend Ibu, originally from Senegal, asks her to offer hospitality to him and his pregnant wife, Bousso. Mietta decides to make a radical change: she buys an apartment big enough for the couple and their child, Khadim. A temporary favour turns into a shared life.

With Ibu often away for work, the two women – one young, one old – are left to share a home and a daily routine. Over the years, as little Khadim grows up and Mietta begins to feel the weight of age, questions of parenting, privacy and dependence strain the household. Talk of another child and of Italian citizenship exposes the imbalances of power under their roof. What emerges is a fragile, unconventional family, built beyond blood ties and across differences of culture, class and generation.

Participants

Mietta Zugaro
In her seventies and retired, Mietta was once a juvenile court judge but never had a family of her own. She lives alone in an elegant Milan neighbourhood until she buys a larger apartment to share with Ibu, Bousso and their son.

Ibrahima "Ibu" Ba
IBHRAIMA, known as Ibu (55), arrived in Italy on a tourist visa in 2001 and lived illegally for several years, selling watches on the beaches. That's how he met Mietta, who later helped him regularize his status. In 2017, he asked her for help in obtaining family reunification with his wife, Bousso. Today, he works as a security guard at a supermarket chain.

Bousso Thiaw
BOUSSO (34) was born in Pire Gureye, a village in a rural area 100 km from Dakar. She dropped out of high school and began working in a boutique alongside her mother. At age 19, she married Ibu, and at 27, she joined him in Italy while pregnant with Khadim—that's when she met Mietta for the first time.

Khadim Ba
Ibu and Bousso's son, who grows up in the middle of the household over the years the film follows.

IDFA 2026

Following its world premiere in the Special Screenings section of the 21st Festa del Cinema di Roma on 20 October 2026, **The Middle Room** screens at IDFA 2026. The film will be released in Italian cinemas from January 2027, distributed by OpenDDB – Distribuzioni Dal Basso.

Section: LUMINOUS

International Premiere

Friday, 13 November 2026 • 18:00 • Pathé City 6, Amsterdam

Q&A with director **Enrico Maisto** and
producers **Riccardo Annoni** and **Francesca Riccardi**

Additional Screenings

Saturday, 14 November 2026 • 10:30 • Tuschinski 4

Q&A with director **Enrico Maisto** and
producers **Riccardo Annoni** and **Francesca Riccardi**

Monday, 16 November 2026 • 15:45 • Ketelhuis: Zaal 1

Q&A with director **Enrico Maisto**

Tuesday, 17 November 2026 • 16:00 • The Pulse 2

Wednesday, 18 November 2026 • 12:00 • Rialto SILO Zaal 1

→ **Tickets:** Available via the IDFA festival website



Why This Film Now?

Across Europe, questions of migration, hospitality and integration are debated mostly in the abstract – in statistics, policies and headlines. Far less is seen of what happens when those questions move into a single home, between people who must share a kitchen, a hallway and a daily routine.

The Middle Room brings the debate inside the walls of one Milan apartment. A seventy-year-old woman, moved by the wish to find the family she never had, takes in a Senegalese couple and their child. Living together forces her to face the deeper nature of her own intentions – a mirror of the challenges and contradictions that question us as Western societies.

Filmed over several years, the film avoids easy answers. It looks honestly at the power relations hidden inside generosity, while leaving room for something unexpected: a family that grows beyond blood ties and beyond cultural, economic, ethnic and generational differences. At a time when Europe is asking what it means to welcome someone, **The Middle Room** offers an intimate and unsentimental answer.

Director's Note

"I set out convinced I was going to tell a modern fable about cohabitation, but I soon ran into something far more complicated."

I struggled to find my place in this story, much like the protagonists in the house. I moved on tiptoes, believing I could sidestep all my prejudices, without realising that I was the first to take that "middle room" for granted.
I began to look at the real complexity of this experience with new eyes, as an occasion to question our very idea of hospitality, of integration, of family, and the power relations these imply. But I also glimpsed a lot of human potential, as if life, indifferent to categories, boxes, doubts and ambiguities, ultimately found its own balance, prevailing over the temptation to judge.

– Enrico Maisto



Director's Biography

Enrico Maisto is a philosophy graduate of the Università degli Studi di Milano. Since 2016 he has coordinated the film department at the Fondazione Culturale San Fedele in Milan.

He began his career in film in 2008 as a directing intern on the set of Marco Bellocchio's Vincere. In 2014 his first feature documentary, Comandante, competed at the Milano Film Festival, where it won the Premio Aprile.

In 2015, together with Valentina Cicogna, he won the Premio Solinas Documentario with **La Convocazione (The Call),** produced by Start and Rai Cinema. Released in 2017, the film screened at numerous international festivals, including IDFA, Festival dei Popoli, Filmmaker and Doc Point, and won Best Mid-Length Film at Hot Docs, Toronto. In 2018 he served on the jury of the Premio Solinas Documentario.

In 2021 his documentary **L'età dell'innocenza (The Age of Innocence),** produced by Start with Rai Cinema and RSI, won Best Italian Documentary at Festival dei Popoli, and was released theatrically by Wanted Cinema in 2022.

In 2026 he completed **La stanza degli altri (The Middle Room).** He is currently developing his first fiction feature, **Big in Japan**, written with Marco Pettenello and produced by Start with Perseo Film.



Enrico Maisto – Selected Filmography

The Middle Room (La stanza degli altri) – Documentary, 79', 2026. Produced by Start with Rai Cinema in co-production with Noha Film. Rome Film Fest – Special Screenings; IDFA – Luminous.

L'età dell'innocenza (The Age of Innocence) – Documentary, 75', 2021. Produced by Start with Rai Cinema in co-production with Ventura Film and RSI. Festival dei Popoli – Italian Competition (Best Documentary); Presente Italiano (Best Film 2022).

The Call (La Convocazione) – Documentary, 57', 2017. Produced by Start with Rai Cinema. IDFA – Mid-Length Competition; Hot Docs 2018 – World Showcase (Best Mid-Length Film); Festival dei Popoli – International Competition (Audience Award).

Comandante – Documentary, 70', 2014. Milano Film Festival – International Competition (Premio Aprile).

Producer's Note

When we first met Mietta, Ibu and Bousso, we thought we were looking at a modern fairy tale: a lonely woman opening her home, a family finding shelter. It took us years to understand that this fairy tale was also our own: the reassuring story the West loves to tell about itself when it welcomes others.

Inside that Milan apartment, something more uncomfortable and more truthful was unfolding. Hosts and guests are never equals: a home belongs to someone, and gratitude is expected. The echo of colonialism survives in everyday gestures even more than in words. And there is old age, so often lived out in solitude in Europe. Ibu and Bousso came looking for something else, yet when Mietta falls ill, they are the ones who care for her.

And yet, amid these inequalities, something resembling a family takes shape: fragile, self-interested, at times unfair, but real.

Making this film meant confronting our own prejudices, letting go of judgment and staying with the contradictions without resolving them. We do not know whether Mietta, Ibu, Bousso and Khadim are a family. We do know that the question concerns us all: whom we welcome, on what terms, and who is left outside the room.

– Riccardo Annoni and Francesca Riccardi

Producer's Biography

Riccardo Annoni – Producer

Riccardo Annoni is an Italian film producer. He came to cinema from theatre and television, and in 1998 founded Start, a production and post-production company dedicated to documentaries and arthouse cinema. For more than twenty-five years, he has shaped the company around a clear idea: standing by filmmakers through the long time creative documentary requires, and giving space to stories with strong social and environmental resonance. Attentive to new voices, he has often worked with emerging directors, building Italian and European co-productions that give each project an international dimension. His ongoing collaboration with Enrico Maisto, now on their third film together, reflects his belief in long-term relationships with authors.

Francesca Riccardi – Producer

Francesca Riccardi is an Italian producer, distributor and writer based in Brussels. Trained in Political Philosophy at the University of Pisa and in storytelling at Scuola Holden in Turin, she brings to production both a taste for open questions and a close attention to narrative. Since 2016 she has worked with Start, following documentaries through every stage, from development and production to festival strategy and Italian theatrical distribution. An alumna of EURODOC, IDFA Academy, Match Me! Locarno and Torino Film Lab, she is drawn to documentaries that experiment with form and language, and to stories about family, identity and social realities. She is committed to supporting emerging and underrepresented voices, especially women filmmakers. In Brussels she programmes films for the Collectif 24 cineforum at CASI-UO and has recently joined the film collective Ezme film.

Production Company

Start

Start is a production and post-production company founded in 1998. Over the years it has specialised in documentaries and auteur films, with a particular focus on social and environmental issues. It develops projects in co-production with other Italian and European companies, often working with young filmmakers. Its films have screened at the most important international festivals.

Start currently has in production the documentary **Iconoclash** by Riccardo Palladino, and in development the documentary **Our body is a battleground** by Gianluca Abbate and the fiction features **Etiopia** by Bruno Oliviero and **Big in Japan** by Enrico Maisto.

Start – Selected Filmography

La stanza degli altri (2026) by Enrico Maisto, produced with Rai Cinema in co-production with Noha Film. Presented in the Special Screening & Best Doc section of the 21st Rome Film Fest and selected for the Luminous section of the 39th International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA). Theatrical distribution in Italy: OpenDDB.

Leila (2025) by Alessandro Abba Legnazzi, Clementina Abba Legnazzi and Giada Vincenzi. Selected for the Panorama Italia Competition at Alice nella città, Rome 2025 and for Premio Salani Competition at Trieste Film Festival Theatrical distribution in Italy: Start

Across (2023) by Irene Dorigotti, produced with Rai Cinema in co-production with Noha Film and RSI. Selected for the Notti Veneziane section of the Giornate degli Autori at the Venice International Film Festival, and for the Opus Bonum section at the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival. Sales agent: Antipode. Theatrical distribution in Italy: Start.

Le Fardeau (2023) by Elvis Sabin Ngaibino, produced by Makongo Film (CAR), Start (IT) with Rai Cinema, and Les Films de l'œil sauvage (FR). Presented in the International Competition at IDFA 2023, winner of the International Competition at Filmmaker Festival 2023, in the International Competition at Cinéma du Réel 2024. Sales agent: Andana Films. Theatrical distribution in Italy: Start.

L'età dell'innocenza (2021) by Enrico Maisto, produced with Rai Cinema in co-production with the Swiss company Ventura Film and RSI. Winner of the Best Italian Documentary Award at the 62nd Festival dei Popoli. Sales agent: Taskovsky Film. Theatrical distribution in Italy: Wanted Cinema.

De Sancto Ambrosio (2018) by Antonio Di Biase. Selected for the Opus Bonum section at the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival and for the International Competition at Filmmaker 2018, where it won the Movie People Award.

Chaco (2017) by Daniele Incalcaterra and Fausta Quattrini, produced with Daniele Incalcaterra and Elefant Films. Winner of the Greenpeace Award – Best Environmental Film at the 32nd Mar del Plata International Film Festival, the Best Film Award at Visions du Réel 2018, and the Best Feature Film Award in the International Competition at the 59th Festival dei Popoli.

La Convocazione (2017) by Enrico Maisto, produced with Rai Cinema. Winner of the MyMovies Audience Award at the 58th Festival dei Popoli, selected for the International Competition for Mid-Length Documentary at IDFA 2017, and winner of the Best Mid-Length Documentary Award at Hot Docs 2018. The film was shortlisted among 15 documentaries for the 2018 David di Donatello Awards.

Il passo (2016) by Mattia Colombo, Francesco Ferri and Alessandra Locatelli. Selected for the Compétition Internationale Moyens Métrages at Visions du Réel 2016, Nyon.

Voglio dormire con te (2014) by Mattia Colombo, co-produced with the French production company The Kingdom. Presented in the Compétition internationale premiers films at Cinéma du Réel 2015, Paris, and selected for Biografilm Festival in Bologna.

Other major co-productions

La casa dell'amore (2020) by Luca Ferri, produced by Effendemfilm, Lab 80 film, Enece film and Prima luce in association with Start. Presented at the 70th Berlinale, Forum section.

La consegna (2017) by Suranga D. Katugampala, produced by Okta film in association with (h)films and Start. Presented at the 74th Venice International Film Festival and winner of the MigrArti funding call.

Our War (2016) by Benedetta Argentieri, Bruno Chiaravallotti and Claudio Jampaglia, produced by Possibile Film, Rai Cinema, Lorenzo Gangarossa and Start. Presented Out of Competition at the 73rd Venice International Film Festival.

Atlante 1783 (2016) by Maria Giovanna Cicciari, produced by Zivago Media and Start. Presented at the International Film Critics' Week of the 73rd Venice International Film Festival, and selected for Doclisboa 2016 and the 47th International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Development Awards

East Silver Caravan Award, offered by the Institute of Documentary Film (Prague) at the Doc Co-Production Market & Pitching Forum 2023, MIA Market, Rome

Audience Design tutoring by Greta Nordio, Milano Film Network 2025 post-production Atelier

Markets, Workshops and Labs

MatchMe! – Locarno Pro 2023, Locarno Film Festival

Proxima – Doc at Work 2024, Festival dei Popoli

Visioni Incontra 2024 – Official Selection, Best Documentary Project

EURODOC Local Workshop, Biella, 2025

Credits

Directed by
Enrico Maisto

Story and Screenplay
Enrico Maisto

Cinematography
Enrico Maisto

Sound
Enrico Maisto

Editing
Enrica Gatto
Veronica Scotti

Sound Design and Music
Massimo Mariani

Colour Grading
Jacopo Loiodice

Story Consultant
Zeynep Güzel

With the participation of
Mietta Zugaro
Bousso Thiaw
Ibrahima Ba
Khadim Ba
Mohamadou Fadilou "Momo" Ba

Producers
Riccardo Annoni
Francesca Riccardi

Co-producer
Antonio Prata

Production
Start with Rai Cinema

Co-production
Noha Film

With the contribution of
MiC – Direzione Generale Cinema e Audiovisivo

With the support of
Film Commission Torino Piemonte – Piemonte Doc Film Fund

Festival Distributor
Johannes Klein

Italian Distribution
OpenDDB – Distribuzioni Dal Basso

Technical Information

Original Title	La stanza degli altri
English Title	The Middle Room
Genre	Documentary
Country	Italy, Switzerland
Year of Production	2026
Running Time	79 minutes
Format	HD
Original Languages	Italian, Wolof
Shooting Location	Milan, Italy